

For Information

DATE: June 17, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **EARLY LEARNING SERVICES IN PEEL**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide an overview of early learning services, including Ontario Early Years Centres, currently delivered in Peel Region.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The service system of early learning and child care, for children during their first six years, sets the stage for their lifelong learning, behaviour and health.
- The Region is very involved in the planning and implementation of early learning programs designed to allow children from birth to six to reach their fullest potential.
- The resulting programs deliver inclusive and accessible services promoting healthy early development and school readiness.

DISCUSSION**1. Early Learning Services Background**

The Region of Peel provides, and supports programs which strengthen and build supportive caring environment that contribute to the positive futures of our children, families and community. Numerous studies have proven that good early learning and care programs can reduce inequities among children and economists have demonstrated that public spending in early childhood provides far greater return on investment than interventions later in life. As a result, establishing a strong foundation in the early years, and building on it, is essential to Peel's social and economic future.

The years before six are the most influential to a child's development as they set the stage for their lifelong learning, behaviour and health. Ideally, by age six, children have a solid foundation for reaching their full potential in the years ahead. It is recognized that, for a variety of reasons not all parents are personally able to provide this type of opportunity for their young Children.

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In partnership with Success By 6, the Best Start Network, school boards, libraries and other community agencies, the Region is very involved in the planning and implementation of early learning programs designed to allow children from birth to six to reach their fullest potential. These inclusive and accessible programs promote healthy early development and school readiness.

In Peel, families have a wide range of complementary early learning and child care options to consider depending on their unique needs. Programs and services include licensed child care centres, licensed home child care, school based hubs and readiness centres, nursery and play schools, Ontario Early Years Centres, and the L.I.O.N. (Learning In Our Neighbourhood) a mobile early learning centre program. (See Appendix 1 for list of community programs)

a) Licensed Child Care

Licensed child care service providers offer child care for children between six weeks and twelve years of age and employ Registered Early Childhood Educators and Early Childhood Assistants.

Licensed child care may be found in a child care centre setting or in a private home. In either case, these programs are licensed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and must meet the requirements of the Day Nurseries Act. Licensed child care programs have to meet and maintain provincial standards. These standards help the program providers to meet the health, safety and developmental needs of children.

b) Unlicensed Child Care

Some families select informal child care for their children with an individual who is unlicensed. Families may choose this type of care because the fees are often lower and unlicensed caregivers may offer flexibility with scheduling. Unlicensed caregivers do not fall under the guidelines of the Day Nurseries Act and are not bound by its requirements.

c) Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs)

In contrast to child care programs, an Ontario Early Years Centre is a place for children up to the age of six and their parents and/or caregivers to participate in free programs and activities together. OEYCs were established in April 2002 by the provincial government as a place where parents and caregivers can get answers to questions, and obtain information about programs and services that are available for young children. OEYCs give caregivers and parents an opportunity to talk to early years' professionals, as well as other parents and caregivers in the community.

The OEYC programs are a gateway to community supports and social service programs. Programs are supportive, welcoming, and accessible to various culturally appropriate services, many of which are available in several languages.

Services include:

- Early learning and literacy programs for parents and children
- Programs to help parents and caregivers in all aspects of early child development
- Programs on pregnancy and parenting
- Links to other early years programs in the community

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- Outreach activities so all parents can get involved with their local Ontario Early Years Centre

There are eight main OEYCs in the Region of Peel and various satellite offices:

Brampton

- Ward 2 - Brampton Centre
- Ward 5 - Brampton West-Mississauga
- Ward 8 - Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale

Caledon

- Ward 5 - Caledon

Mississauga

- Ward 2 - Mississauga South
- Ward 3 - Mississauga East
- Ward 7 - Mississauga Centre
- Ward 10 - Mississauga West

Parents and caregivers have the greatest impact on how a child grows and develops in the early years, therefore OEYCs are programs where parents and caregivers bring their children to participate in play based activities, supporting learning and attachment between parent/caregiver and child. It is also a place where parents/caregivers can enhance their capacity by connecting with other parents/caregivers, attending training, borrowing resources, and connecting with other Early Years Services/Programs.

d) Full Day Learning

Full Day Learning is another early learning service option which will be available to some children in Peel beginning September 2010 through phased implementation that will be complete by 2016. On October 26, 2009 Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that Ontario would start phasing in full day early learning for four and five year olds reaching full implementation by 2016. This initiative supports the Province's plan to build a stronger school system, a well-educated workforce and Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Current research demonstrates that full day learning programs contribute to school readiness, improve literacy achievement in higher grades, narrow the gap in achievement levels for lower socioeconomic status students, and improve retention rates. A recent Rutgers University study found that full time learning has dramatic and lasting effects on children's learning across a broad range of knowledge and skills.

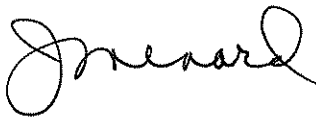
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CONCLUSION

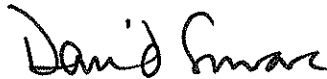
The Region of Peel along with community partners fully support quality focused early child learning services which prepare children to succeed and that promote school readiness. Regional staff continue to deliver and support creative solutions that meet the diverse needs of our community and will continue to research and implement new initiatives to help parents prepare their children from birth to age six for school and for life.

The Region continues to demonstrate its commitment to continuous learning and collaboration through involvement in valuable early learning community initiatives which in turn result in enhanced service provision to families in Peel.



Janet Menard
Commissioner of Human Services

Approved for Submission:



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

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c. Legislative Services

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APPENDIX I

Peel's Early Learning Programs:

Community Programs/Initiatives	Purpose of program/Initiative
Licensed Child Care	Region of Peel has 179 purchase of service agreements with early learning and child care service providers who deliver licensed care in 369 programs for children ages six weeks to twelve years old.
Subsidized Child Care	Child care fee subsidy helps eligible low income parents, foster parents or legal guardians of children to pay for licensed care from birth to twelve years of age. New: In 2010, the Region eliminated parental co-payment for child care assisting the 2,650 working families that currently receive a child care subsidy.
Learn.Play.Care (LPC) Child Care Centres	The Region operates 12 Learn.Play.Care. Centres, offering licensed early learning and child care services for children aged 18 months to five years, including children with special needs. Specialized programs include evening care, inclusive nursery school and an intensive, therapeutic program for infants and their caregiver.
Best Start in Peel	Five Best Start early learning and child care sites operated by Family Day Care Services, PLASP and the Region of Peel, located within local schools provide integrated programming and supports to children and families. A research project, led by Dr. Janette Pelletier, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto is currently underway to evaluate the processes of implementing and sustaining Best Start programs and program outcomes for children, parents and staff.
Licensed Nursery Schools	Nursery school programs offer the same early learning opportunities as child care programs, however typically offered on a half day basis.
Licensed Home Child Care	Licensed home early learning and child care service offers flexible full-time, part-time, shift, evening and weekend child care from caregivers based in their own homes.
Ontario Early Years Centres	The Ontario government created Ontario Early Year Centres to be a place where parents and caregivers can get answers to questions, information about the program and services that are available for young children, and an opportunity to talk to early year professionals, as well as other parents and caregivers in the community.
L.I.O.N. (Learning in our Neighbourhood)	Fully-equipped mobile early learning resource program vehicles travel to high growth, under-serviced communities throughout Peel to ensure that all children start school prepared with literacy, numeracy and social skills. L.I.O.N.s let children enjoy interactive, play-based programs while parents talk to early childhood professionals about parenting and development.

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Early Learning in Peel Shelters	The Early Learning and Child Care Program in Shelters provide sensitive care and developmentally appropriate activities for homeless children and their parents or guardians.
St. John Fisher Neighborhood Learning Place	This is a collaborative partnership of community agencies that provide families with children from birth to six years with free, inclusive programs and services that support healthy child development and prepare children to be successful in school. It endeavours to reach out and provide information, resources and support to at-risk and isolated families in the Bramalea area.
Parenting and Family Literacy Centres	Each Parenting and Family Literacy Centre is delivered by local school boards and offer a variety of fun learning activities for children while engaging parents in their child's learning. Through music, stories and play, babies and children can start to build essential skills like sharing, early literacy and numeracy as well as communications skills.
Early Years Hubs and Readiness Centres	Preparing to enter kindergarten for the first time is the focus at the Peel District School Board's early years hubs and readiness centres.